

In Memory of Arthur Nelson Patrick

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Lynden Rogers

Senior Lecturer, School of Science and Mathematics, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW

Born in Cooranbong to Bertha and William Patrick, Arthur moved with his family to a new life in the bush at Pappinbarra Junction, near Wauchope, shortly after his fourth birthday. From ages 8 to 11 Arthur attended public school but formal education was interrupted when he and his mother relocated to Bellangry, 15 km away.

For the next five years Arthur's education centred around the farm. The initial task of clearing the re-growth on the home 45 acres, followed by contract timber-cutting, reinforced an ethic of dawn-to-dusk work. In quiet times young Arthur could be found riding his horse, lost in bush poetry, much of which he learned in the saddle twixt home and the timber.

It was one day while tree felling that Arthur decided that he should go back to Cooranbong, to the Australasian Missionary College (AMC), now Avondale College of Higher Education. The years 1950–1953 saw him lay the academic foundations which would later serve him so well. His Leaving Certificate results would have taken him to Sydney University but instead, in 1954 he enrolled in AMC's first intake for the BA (Theology) degree offered under the auspices of Pacific Union College (Angwin, California) from which he graduated in 1957. The next year saw Arthur appointed to Christchurch, SNZ, as pastor evangelist.

On January 14, 1959, Arthur met special Avondale friend, Joan Merle Howse at the altar in the Papanui Church. It was a union which would enrich the lives of countless associates, students and church members.

Then in 1970 it was off to the seminary at Berrien Springs and the post graduate study of which Arthur had long dreamed. By August 1972, after receiving special permission to overload, he had completed a nine-quarter MDiv and also a four-quarter MA in systematic theology. Unfortunately, the doctoral program in which he wanted to enroll was not yet

accredited so Arthur took his DMin at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. June 1973 brought graduation which was followed by a return to Australia.

Plans for church ministry in Sydney were quickly trumped by a call to Avondale where the Patrick family would be located for the next 18 years. Arthur lectured in the Theology Faculty, served as the first director of the Ellen G White/Seventh-day Adventist Research Centre, coordinated Avondale's academic processes as Registrar and served for one year as College Church pastor.

In the face of some employment uncertainty during this period Arthur also resumed formal study; an MLitt at the University of New England and a PhD at Newcastle focusing on the interface between religion and society in Australia, finishing in 1992.

Arthur was then appointed senior chaplain at Sydney Adventist Hospital, a position he enjoyed until 1996. Then followed two years as an associate professor of church history and pastoral ministry at La Sierra University in California. A final return to Cooranbong in 1998 commenced a well-earned but busy retirement. Since then Arthur presented many guest lectures in various places.

Arthur's skill with words was legendary and one of his most stimulating hobbies was writing for publication, an activity that began in the 1950s and persisted for six decades. His scholarly articles listed on ResearchOnline@Avondale have currently attracted 1,755 downloads and his own website, adventiststudies.com, has so far attracted over 11,000 visitors. The SDA Periodical Index lists some 121 titles from his prolific pen. Arthur received a number of honours during his life including the prestigious Charles E Weniger medallion.

He fought a successful battle against cancer for some 12 years, only to be recently diagnosed with an aggressive abdominal malignancy. He had sat at too many such bedsides not to know what lay ahead, yet his calm acceptance, his Christian faith, and his courage inspired all.

Arthur was quick to recognise unfairness or lack of charity in the way certain individuals and groups were treated, particularly by the Church he loved. This led him to expend himself on unpopular issues of social justice, such as the equality of women in the SDA Organisation, protection against abuse and exploitation of all kinds, and the better understanding of homosexuality.

He also possessed keen insight into more academic issues facing Adventism, such as developing an adequate understanding of the ministry of Ellen White, correctly contextualising early theological positions and exploring the interface between Christianity and science. Arthur was totally unafraid of evidence.

For those who strive for fairness and justice, who value honest and careful scholarship, and who uphold family values there can be few better models than Arthur Patrick. [TEACH](#)

